

Cochrane Style Manual Basics

A collection of essential style guidelines for authors of Cochrane Reviews and protocols.

From the Cochrane Style Manual
community.cochrane.org/style-manual



Cochrane Style Manual Basics

General points

1. Active and passive voice: The active voice (e.g. “two authors extracted data”) is preferable to the passive voice (“data were extracted by two authors”).
2. Cochrane style for commonly used terms:

Handsearching (<i>not</i> hand searching)	Cochrane (when referring to the Cochrane Collaboration)
Website (<i>not</i> web site)	the Cochrane Library (no italics)
P value (<i>not</i> p-value)	the Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials (CENTRAL)
fixed-effect model (<i>not</i> fixed effect model)	follow up (verb) and follow-up (noun or adjective)
random-effects model (<i>not</i> random effects model)	
subgroup (<i>not</i> sub-group)	
3. Numbers: Spell out numbers less than 10 in full, unless used with units (e.g. 5 mL) or in a list with other numbers (e.g. 6, 12, and 24 months), or in tables. In the text of a review write the number out in full if it is at the start of a sentence.
4. Dates: Spell months out in full to avoid confusion between different regional date formats (e.g. May 2000; 1 May 2000), and express decades as, for example, 1960s (no apostrophe).
5. Pharmaceutical drugs: Use the recommended International Non-proprietary Name (rINN) for all pharmaceutical drugs (and put the specific brand name in brackets if needed).
6. Databases: MEDLINE (*not* Medline); Embase (*not* EMBASE); OLDMEDLINE (*not* Oldmedline); PsycLIT (*not* Psychlit); PsycINFO (*not* Psychinfo); CINAHL (*not* CINHAL or Cinahl).

Abbreviations and symbols

7. Use abbreviations and acronyms only if they are widely known and not using them could make reading tedious. Write in full in the first instance and follow it immediately by the abbreviated version or acronym in brackets; for example, “We contacted the World Health Organization (WHO). The WHO provided the relevant information.”
8. Use 'e.g.' and 'i.e.' (with full stops, but not followed by a comma), and 'etc.'.
9. Standard unit abbreviations need not be defined (e.g. mL and mg).
10. Symbols (e.g. + – & < > =) should be used in text only if the descriptive version is cumbersome or inappropriate. Use one space either side of the symbol (e.g. > 100 participants) except for a negative number (e.g. negative pressure of –50 mmHg). There should be no space either side of / (e.g. 10/51).

Grammar, spelling, and punctuation

11. Write things you plan on doing in the future tense (such as in a protocol for a Cochrane Review) and things you have already done in the past tense (such as in a Cochrane Review).
12. Insert one space between a number and the unit (e.g. 0.4 mg).

13. Be consistent when using words where different spelling is possible (e.g. randomised and randomized).

Presentation of data

14. There are different ways to present summary statistics in the text.

- risk ratio (RR) was 0.14 (95% confidence interval (CI) 0.08 to 0.24) (Use this option if the RR and CI have not been abbreviated earlier in the text.)
- mean difference 1.5 hours (95% CI 0.98 to 1.20)
- (RR 1.02, 95% CI 0.87 to 1.19)

15. Present numerical results to two decimal places (e.g. RR 0.14) unless the number is very small, in which case use three significant figures.

References

16. Inserting references into Review Manager:

- **Study/reference identifier:** Use the last name of the first author and the year of publication as the study/reference identifier where possible (e.g. Baldini 2004).
- **Authors:** List only the first six authors of any reference, and use “et al” after the sixth author if there are more than six authors; for example, Abera G, Takahashi N, Thugwane J, Roba F, Hwang Y-C, Yegorova V, et al. The comma before “et al” is optional, but be consistent in its use.
- **Punctuation:** No full stops at the end of each line, such as after the authors or article title.
- **Journal article title:** The first letter of the first word of the article title should be in upper case; all other words should be lower-case unless they are proper names (trade names, country names, etc.) or require an upper-case letter.
- **Translated article title:** Include the English translation of a journal article title if it is provided by the journal or database. If an English translation is not available, only enter the original title.
- **Journal title:** Enter the *full* journal title using title case (i.e. each substantive word starts with an upper-case letter).
- **Translated journal title:** Include the English translation of a journal title if it is provided by the journal or database. Place the English title in square brackets after the original journal title.
- **Page number style:** 324-6 or 256-60 are correct (*not* 324-326 or 324-26, nor 256-260 or 256-0).

17. Using references in the text:

- Study/reference identifiers can be used as part of a sentence (e.g. “Jones 2001 was included in the analysis.”).
- Study/reference identifiers that support a statement in a sentence should be listed in round brackets inside the full stop at the end of the sentence or within the closest punctuation, for example, “Two trials included data (Kamau 2001; Tomescu 2006).”
- Sentences that include multiple pieces of information that are supported by a number of citations should be structured so that it is clear to which piece of information each citation relates, for example “One trial included women only (Smith 1990), while another included men only (Jones 1999).”

-
- If two or more references are used to support one statement, list the references in alphabetical order and then by year of publication, separating each with a semicolon.

How to cite

Cochrane Style Manual Working Group. Cochrane Style Manual Basics. community.cochrane.org/style-manual/basics (accessed [*insert day month year*]).